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Theodore Roosevelt returns from Deployment

By JO3 Timothy Humphrey

NORFOLK, Va. – Thousands of friends and family members gathered at Naval Station Norfolk for the return of USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), March 11, following a six-month deployment to the Persian Gulf in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

The early morning arrival of Theodore Roosevelt didn't deter the crowd. Family members waited in the early Saturday morning chill, anticipating the return of their loved ones.

"It's like Christmas all over again," said Diane Drach, mother of Machinist Mate Fireman Ashley Drach, who is stationed aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt. "We are so proud of her, especially being in the Navy during a time of war."

While deployed, Theodore Roosevelt and Carrier Air Wing Eight (CVW 8) launched 5,412 sorties totaling nearly 19,362 flight hours in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Maritime Security Operations (MSO).

Carrier Air Wing Eight (CVW 8) squadrons – Fighter Squadrons (VF) 213 and 31; Strike Fighter (VFA) 15 and 87; Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 124; Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 Det. 1, Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron



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(HS) 3; Sea Control Squadron (VS) 24 and Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141 all returned earlier in the week to their homeports.

CVW 8 maintained around-the-clock air operations from Theodore Roosevelt and Iraqi air bases. These missions set the condition for security and stability in the region by detecting, deterring and disputing international terrorist organizations.

“We protected soldiers and Marines on the ground, we protected Iraqi oil infrastructure, and we brought stability and security to the Arabian Gulf and the rest of the Central Command region,” said Rear Admiral James Winnefeld, Jr., Commander, Carrier Strike Group Two.

Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group (TR CSG) consists of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), guided missile cruiser USS San Jacinto (CG 56), guided missile destroyers USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) and USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79), Los Angeles class attack submarine USS Annapolis (SSN 760), fleet replenishment oiler USNS Kanawha (T-AO 96) and USNS Mount Baker (T-AE 34).

Spanish frigate SPS Alvaro de Bazan (F101) also conducted a cooperative deployment as an intergraded part of TR CSG. The ship returned to Ferrol, Spain in December.

“During our time out there, we preformed infrastructure exercises, anti-piracy and security operations, and assisted foreign navies,” said Cmdr. John Esposito, USS Donald Cook commanding officer. “The crew was the best ever and did a great job in all facets of operations.”



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With the excitement of returning home, there are some heavy hearts within Fighter Squadron (VF) 213 and 31. This marked the final combat deployment of the F-14 “Tomcat.” Both squadrons are transitioning to the F/A-18E/F Super Hornets later this year.

VF 31 will continue to operate the F-14D with CVW 8 throughout the spring and summer aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt during the ship’s readiness and sustainment period. Then, they will begin their transition to the Super Hornet in October.

This is Theodore Roosevelt’s ninth deployment since commissioning in 1986, and the ship’s third in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

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